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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001384

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: PREL PGOV KPKO UN AU SU ER
SUBJECT: ON EVE OF UNSYG VISIT, UN CHIEF DISCUSSES NCP,
SPLM DYNAMICS

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶11. (C) Noting that the relationship between Sudan and the UN had improved in the last year, the UN Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General told CDA Fernandez that UNSYG Ban Ki Moon's September 4-8 visit comes at an ideal time to sustain momentum on the Darfur peace process, pave the way for UNAMID, and raise the profile of the CPA. Hardliners and pragmatists in Khartoum view Ban's visit differently, with the former seeing a tacit acknowledgment of a successful strategy to overcome UNSCR 1706, the latter an affirmation for continued engagement with the international community. He warned of the risks of another failed SPLM attempt to organize the Darfur rebel groups and called on the international community to encourage the SPLM to coordinate with the UN/AU political process--and thus head-off Asmara's baleful influence on SPLM efforts. End summary.

UN-Sudan Relations Much Improved

¶12. (C) On the eve of UNSYG Ban Ki Moon's first visit to Sudan, UN Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General Taye Brooke-Zerihoun told CDA Fernandez on September 1 that the UN's relationship with the Khartoum regime "was much better than it was one year ago, despite all the difficulties." The Government is now "accommodating" the UN on flight and customs clearances, is more open to meetings with UN officials, and is implementing the High Level Communique on Humanitarian Access, all steps that make it possible to build a rapport with the regime leadership. He noted that a year ago, "Sudanese government officials were leading demonstrations against the UN. Now, it is different." While the UN would not ignore some of the lingering issues--such as the January 2007 assault on humanitarian workers in Nyala and visa restrictions on UN employees--the UNSYG's visit came at an ideal time to sustain momentum on the peace process, pave the way for the UN-African Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), and raise the profile of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) implementation, according to Taye.

Different Prisms: Hard-liners and Pragmatists

¶13. (C) Pragmatists and hardliners view Ban's visit through a

distinct prism, said Taye. The former see it as tacit acknowledgment of their success in overcoming UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1706 in favor of the more recent UNSCR 1769 to authorize the UN/AU hybrid peace-keeping force.

The latter hope the visit will highlight the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and underscore the importance of improving Sudan's relations with the international community.

Ban's first event would be an address to the UN Association in Khartoum in order to empower the pragmatists and "bring Sudan into the fold," said Taye.

¶ 14. (C) The ASRSG said that the regime's policies reflect the ongoing conflict within the National Islamic Front (NIF), which pits the National Congress Party (NCP) against Hassan al Turabi's Popular Congress Party (PCP) and pragmatists, such as Vice President Ali Osman Taha and National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) Director General Salah Ghosh, against hardliners, such as Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie and the Ministers of Defense and Interior. The recent expulsions of the Canadian Charge d'Affaires and the country director for CARE "were symptomatic of these internal struggles," said Taye. Implying that the pragmatists were ascendant, Taye explained that "they understand they have to give in here and there, and on these expulsions, they conceded." He believed that Vice President Taha "has made a little bit of a comeback" in recent months.

Instability in the SPLM

¶ 15. (C) The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) is similarly unstable, with three major internal reshuffles in the last year, according to Taye. A reshuffle of cabinet

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posts in the Government of National Unity was also on the horizon, with Foreign Minister Lam Akol and Presidential Advisor Mansour Khalid still poised to swap positions. The SPLM deserved credit for rooting out corruption early in the tenure of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS). The economy, however, was "not under control," and Juba looks like a "frontier town," with charlatan businessmen from Uganda, Kenya, and the Congo driving the economy. Ban would spend one night in Juba--the first overnight by a UNSYG in Southern Sudan--and hoped to focus on CPA-related issues throughout this trip. One such issue would be the redeployment deadline for the SPLA and Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) troops. Taye suggested that the issue was a "matter of terminology:" while the vast majority of SAF forces had been redeployed North, demobilized, and relieved of their weapons, some were still receiving salaries from Khartoum.

Another Failed SPLM Initiative for Darfur?

¶ 16. (C) The SPLM's attempts to organize a Darfur initiative exemplify its disorganization. According to Taye, First Vice President Salva Kiir and Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Vice President Riek Machar are at odds on the SPLM's role, and both have been disconnected from the SPLM's Darfur Taskforce. "My money is that they'll fail again, and I don't know how they'll take that," said Taye, adding that the Darfur rebel movements had lost patience with the SPLM after several delayed meetings in Southern Sudan following the Arusha conference in late July.

¶ 17. (C) Taye warned that Eritrea--"who is not happy about the UN/AU process"--was using the SPLM for its own purposes. Asmara is hosting rebel political leaders "that don't amount to much and are bereft of any link to the commanders" and hope to utilize the SPLM conference to bring military elements under the control of their designated proxies. The international community could not warn the SPLM about

Eritrea's motives, but the U.S. could emphasize that the SPLM coordinate with the UN and AU per the Tripoli Consensus and find a narrow role for its initiative under the broader peace process. "They don't have an agenda," said Taye, "they just want to be accepted as a genuine player."

FERNANDEZ